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Ugadi Rathotsava at Kukke Sri Subramanya Temple on Friday

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Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and former RDPR Minister K S Eshwarappa pose with the latter's resignation before the media at CM's residence on Race Course Raod in Bengaluru on Friday night; (right) Eshwarappa's supporters raise anti-Congress slogans outside CM's residence PRAKASH GADEKAL

BOOKED IN SUICIDE CASE, KSE QUITS BOMMAI MINISTRY

Eshwarappa vows to return as minister, not to take part in BJP meet today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

RURAL Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Minister KS Eshwarappa on Friday evening tendered his resignation to Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai after being booked for abetting suicide of BJP leader and contractor Santosh Patil, who was found dead in an Udupi hotel room on Tuesday morning after reportedly consuming a drink laced with poison.

The resignation was submitted even as a huge crowd of Eshwarappa's supporters had gathered outside CM Bommai's residence on Race Course Road where the resignation was handed over. Inside the CM's residence there followed a meeting with Bommai and other ministers, which included Byrati Basavraj, MTB Nagaraj, Araga Jnanendra and former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi. Bommai announced soon after that Eshwarappa's resignation had been accepted. As per procedures, the Chief Minister will recommend to the Governor for the latter to accept the resignation.

Eshwarappa will not participate in the party's state executive meeting on Saturday in the newly-formed Vijayanagar district, nor in the next state cabinet, and all his scheduled functions now stand cancelled.

The alleged suicide had taken place after the deceased Patil had put out a "suicide note" in the form of a WhatsApp message blaming Eshwarappa for his death in the wake of his and his associates' allegedly harassment, demanding 40 per cent commission to release total payments of Rs 4 crore for works said to have been completed by him.

Patil had reportedly taken up this issue with Eshwarappa as well as central BJP leaders. Following Patil's suicide and the mention of the 40 per cent commission, opposition Congress — which has been referring to the ruling dispensation as a "40% government — had upped the ante and was baying for not only Eshwarappa's resignation, but also that he be booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act and arrested. P6

CONGRESS BUILDS ANTI-CORRUPTION NARRATIVE

The Congress, which sought to build a narrative against corruption in Karnataka ahead of 2023 polls, has drawn first blood as senior BJP leader KS Eshwarappa exited Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai ministry. AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala focussed on allegations of Contractors' Association about 40 per cent commission in the BJP government after Patil's suicide. P4

Delivery of second full S-400 system from Russia on time

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

RUSSIA'S delivery of the second regiment of the strategic S-400 long range air defence missile system to India is bang on time belying concerns of delay in the wake of the sweeping Western sanctions after the Ukraine war.

"Yes, the delivery of components of the second S-400 missile system is under process," a source said, adding it is being made both by air and sea. The first full S-400 regiment was delivered by December 2021 and has already been operationalised by the Indian Air Force. A simulator, which is a training equipment, is also shipped along with each regiment.

A contract for delivery of five S-400

systems from Russia was signed in October 2018 for around ₹35,000 crore. Each regiment comprises four missile launchers. In sum, India will have 20 missile launchers when all five systems are delivered.

The US has so far refrained from invoking its domestic law, Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), against India's S-400 deal. During the recent 2+2 meeting between the US and Indian defence and foreign ministers in Washington, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had reiterated, "We have not made determination of potential sanctions or waivers under CAATSA law." Acknowledging old ties between India and Russia, Blinken said both countries have a "long history and long relationship" in defence equipment trade.

Major General S B Asthana (Retd), a defence analyst, called it a done deal. "This has to go through irrespective of what the US says. It is a buyer's market and sovereign right of India to choose the best equipment which suits our military and national interest."

FOOD DISORDER

Food delivery to be hit as partners log off till Sunday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

ORDERING food online is going to be difficult over this weekend as food delivery partners (FDPs) have logged off in protest until Sunday against a new system of time slots introduced by the food delivery apps for them to log in. The new system threatens to affect the earnings of FDPs as it changes from peak to non-peak hours.

United Food Delivery Partners' Union President, Vinay Sarathi told The New Indian Express that FDPs are unhappy with the new system brought in by the companies, including Zomato, and is not acceptable. "Unlike usual, time slots have been created for FDPs to join and operate. These slots are fixed like 7-11am, 11am-1pm and on on. Also attendance to these slots is being reserved for company's preferred FDPs. This directly effects earnings as service charges change during peak and non-peak hours," he said. Most FDPs are on strike protesting against the food delivery apps. Members of the Union announced a three-day strike starting from April 15. P5,10

Rain for next 3 days: weatherman

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast thundershowers over most parts of Karnataka for the next three days. An IMD official said the rain is due to local convection, and there is also a trough from west Vidarbha to north interior Karnataka, besides a cyclonic circulation over Lakshadweep area and adjoining southeast Arabian Sea. Apart from this, local convection due to rising temperatures is leading to rainfall.

"Most parts of Karnataka will experience April showers for the next three days, with heavy rainfall for the next two days. Formation of systems will lead to intense rainfall," the official said.

KGF: Chapter 2 shatters box office records

NAVEIN DARSHAN

PRASHANTH Neel's period action drama *KGF: Chapter 2* is all the rage across the country. The sequel to the 2018 blockbuster, *KGF: Chapter 1*, was highly anticipated since its announcement and box-office figures confirm that the new film, the second in eight years for director Prashanth Neel and actor Yash, has exceeded all expectations. Hombale films, the production house of *KGF: Chapter 2*, confirmed that a whopping ₹134.5 crore was collected on Thursday, the opening day. The Hindi version of the film has grossed ₹53.95 crore, making it the highest ever first day collection for any film in the language, ahead of *War* and *Thugs of Hindostan*.

"The success isn't a surprise," said S R Prabhu of Dream Warrior Pictures, the Tamil Nadu distributor of the film. CONTINUED ON: P5

'Bulldozer justice' in Guj too for rioters

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA
@Ahmedabad

WITH a no-nonsense line on law and order and hard Hindutva helping the BJP retain Uttar Pradesh, poll-bound Gujarat appears to be replicating it after initial experimentation in Madhya Pradesh.

On Friday, the state government demolished 'illegal' properties belonging to the accused in the Ram Navami riots at Khambhat, where one person was killed on April 10.

According to officials, the spot where violence, including stone-pelting and arson, took place has been a source of frequent communal tension and the administration is trying to resolve it permanently.

The local administration demolished the shops located in front of a dargah by running a bulldozer. A large contingent of police personnel was present at the spot. Officials said the properties were illegal and criminal activities were taking place there. They claimed only properties that stood on encroached land were demolished. Obstructions including bushes around these places were also removed, they added.

"The area where the riots took place is very sensitive. Therefore, illegal shops were removed under the guidance of SDM to maintain peace and security," said ASP at Khambhat Abhishek Gupta.

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